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AN  
ADDRESS, & PETITION,

TO

HIS MAJESTY,

From Inhabitants of the Town and  
Neighbourhood of SHEFFIELD.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A LETTER TO MR. WALKER,

AND

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE  
SHEFFIELD REGISTER.

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SHEFFIELD

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1794.

RB.23 a.7129



JUSTICE, LIBERTY, and HUMANITY.

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A PETITION TO THE KING.

*From Inhabitants of the Town and Neighbour-  
hood of Sheffield, in the County of York.*

FOR THE TOTAL AND UNQUALIFIED  
ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.

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TO THE KING.

SIRE.

**J**USTICE is eternal. Unconfined by time  
person, circumstance, or place, it ought to  
form the basis of all legitimate Government, and  
the motive of all human intercourse.

As intellectual Beings, we conceive it to be a  
sacred obligation, imposed by the Supreme

Being, *to think for ourselves.* In conformity to which principle, we are naturally led to desire the extension of knowledge throughout the world. As we ourselves feel, we are naturally led to sympathize with those who feel also. Wishing to be rid of the weight of oppression under which *we* groan, we are induced to compassionate those who groan also, and to desire an alleviation of their sufferings.

On our *own* account we have repeatedly petitioned the lower house of Parliament but petitioned in vain. We are weary of the practice. We are disgusted to hear the hallowed name of Liberty made the sport of corrupt Placemen; and we are shocked to see, that in the practice of legislation, Humanity is but a name. We are now petitioning not for ourselves, but for others; for those, whose sorrows harrow up the feeling soul, and terrify the Christian heart, for those who are the victims of avarice, cruelty, rapine, immorality, and luxury. We have the sanction of one of your Majesty's son's, in declaring that the Negro-Slaves, in the West Indies are full as happy as the lower classes of people are in England. We employ so great an authority in justification of our petition; and considering, that we who supplicate your Majesty are generally men of that description, we are bound to conclude, that if our African brethren be no happier than we are, they must be wretched indeed. For we groan, Sire, under great and grievous burdens, and we see no prospect of



redress before our eyes, nor have we a hope that our miseries will shortly end. Our wives and little ones are starving, and ourselves unable to provide them with the common necessities of life, are sunk in sorrow, and compelled to join in their bitter agony and deep despair. But the contemplation of our distressed state becomes additionally alarming, in the certainty of having more burdens accumulated upon us, which may be productive of consequences injurious to the cause of Humanity, and fatal even to the interest of government itself. Such, Sire, is our state and such, from the comparison drawn by the Duke of Clarence, is the state of our Negro brethren in the Colonies. But, in addition to the testimony of so high an authority, we have a volume of respectable evidence delivered into the House of Commons, which proves, beyond contradiction, that our condition is by no means so deplorable as that of the wretched Africans. They are slaves; under which odious epithet, Man is reduced to the condition of the brute, and is deprived of a country, and of the tenderest ties of human life. The rights of a social being are denied to him, and every principle of moral obligation is destroyed. The liberty, the person, and the industry of the slave are at the disposal of the master. Far different is our state; and although from not being represented in the House of Commons, our property may be taken from us without our consent, although from the erection of Barracks through-

out our country, and from the unconstitutional introduction of Foreign troops into it, from the encouragement given to a system of state inquisition, and from the violent measures employed to wrest the liberty of the press from the hands of the subject—we cannot call ourselves free men in the strict sense of the word: Yet our lives cannot be taken from us, but for crimes previously defined and declared punishable by law; nor can our persons be wantonly sported with, to gratify the lust, the avarice, or the cruelty of overseers and slave drivers. So far we have undoubtedly the advantage over the Negro-Slaves; and we cannot help thinking, in justice to the Royal Personage who drew the resemblance, that he reasoned more from our actual condition, than from what we were, and what we ought to be—a free, a happy, and contented People.

Quitting, therefore, the comparison which has been drawn between the Poor of this Country and the Negro Slaves in the Colonies, we beseech your Majesty to take into your gracious consideration our Petition in their behalf. We are happy to congratulate your Majesty, that we not only cultivate reason ourselves but we are daily exerting ourselves to diffuse its influence universally. Our success, Sire, has been wonderful!—We glory in announcing to your Majesty, that, by the use of that reason, we have discovered that Society is made for Man's happiness; that Liberty is the first and best gift of God to Man—which it would be impious not to assert, and sacrilegious to sur-

render. In the names, therefore, of Liberty, of Justice and of Humanity, and for the sake of those, whose cries of " Mercy ! Mercy, Master !" are ringing eternally in our ears, we petition, we implore your Majesty, to put an end to that devilish Commerce in Human Flesh ; which is a thousand times more abominable in the eyes of God and of man, than the practice of selling Human Flesh in Germany—because accompanied with acts more profoundly cruel, and more deliberately inhuman. The voice of an immense majority of the whole nation has invoked the humanity of the House of Commons for the partial Abolition of injustice—but in vain. It was told, that the slave trade was inhuman, impolitic and unchristian. Eighty-eight only, out of 558, voted agreeably to the will of the nation for its Abolition!!—Did the remaining 470 mean thereby to sanction inhumanity and impolicy, and to oppose the Holy Christian Religion, the fundamental maxim of which, is " Do unto all men as you would they should do unto you." One melancholy fact however it has proved that the sense of a majority of the People was not regarded in that House and that Justice and Humanity are of no consideration, when put in competition with Avarice Wealth and Power. But what makes Humanity more than shudder, one of the members of that House, who had his leg bit of by a shark, and whose life was saved by a poor Negro, declared that he should vote *against* the Abolition of the Slave Trade, because the Ne-

groes consumed the refuse of our fisheries. Such marked ingratitude, such unfeeling barbarity, publicly avowed in the British Senate, instead of sending the author to prison for an abuse of speech met with repeated applauses. And what grieves us more, we find, that this very man has been appointed, by your Majesty's ministers, to superintend their provisionment of the Army now carrying on the dreadful work of Human slaughter on the blood-stained fields of Flanders.

So many bars having been thrown in the way to prevent an Abolition of the Slave Trade, by those unfeeling barbarians, who unblushingly, call themselves Slave Dealers, West India Merchants and Planters, so many obstacles having been opposed to the reclamations of humanity in favour of the wretched—we petition your Majesty, in whose hands is mercy, to recommend, or command, the British Senate immediately to abolish, in the fullest manner, and without any qualification, Negro Slavery in the West India Islands—because it is insulting to Human nature, in an age of reason and Philosophy—because it tends to open wide the flood gates of Patronage Corruption and Dependence, inflames and nourishes the sordid passion of Avarice, which is ever ready to feed ambition, to furnish these first means of engaging in ruinous bloody and destructive Wars by which Courtiers are enriched and Nations beggared—because its Abolition will redeem the national honor, too



long sullied by the trade of blood—because it will promote the cause of Liberty, which is striding apace throughout all the regions of the world—because it will avenge peacefully ages of wrongs done to our Negro Brethren—because it will give to Industry its just latitude—because it will put an end to Injustice, Impolicy, Cruelty, Avarice, Havoc, Spoil, Blood—because it will cover a multitude of National Sins, and, in the stead of National Fasts, which are too frequently the dreadful preludes of blood and sorrow, it will be a National Feast, grateful to God, and pleasing to Man. It will extend the Empire of benevolence, the Brotherhood of the Human Race, and immortalise your Majesty's reign, for having established, on their purest principles, the Claims of Justice, and Rights of Man.

## TO THE KING.

### AN ADDRESS

*From Inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood  
of Sheffield, in the County of York.*

SIRE,

**W**E, the undersigned, being warm Friends of Liberty and the Rights of Man, feel ourselves deeply affected by the Sentences which have lately been passed in your Majesty's Courts of Scotland, upon Citizen's Muir, Palmer, Skirving, Margarott and Gerrald.

Had these men been really guilty of crimes their punishment should doubtless have been proportionate to their offences : but, so far from considering it as a crime for a man to use every constitutional means in his power to effect a Reform in the Commons house of Parliament, we think that every man who thus exerts himself, deserves well of his country; since we are persuaded that nothing short of the Accomplishment of such a reform, will restore Peace and Happiness to our present aggrieved and injured nation.

We trusted also, that your Majesty entertained the same opinion with us of such exalted conduct, from your Majesty's having chosen for your most confidential servants in the State, men who had singularly distinguished themselves by their patriotic exertions in the cause of Parliamentary Reform.

But the Friends of these sufferers having brought their case before Parliament without producing the desired effect—the principal of these very servants of your Majesty having opposed the measure with all his corrupt but irresistible Influence—seeing no other resource, we approach your Majesty in this Address, to intreat your Majesty to interfere in behalf of these (whom we deem) *innocent* men, with that Power which the British Constitution has placed in your Majesty, of pardoning whom your Majesty pleases—a privilege which is sometimes graci-

ously extended even to real and palpable criminals.

Let it not be recorded in the history of this country, that King George III. or any of his Judges, transported men for Fourteen Years, because they had dared to speak the same words upon a speculative subject, which, if they were not the immediate means of advancing his Majesty's then Prime Minister to his high situation, caused his Election to be remarkably popular : Let it not be said, that men of education, of refined sentiments, of the most virtuous and benevolent characters, were severed from their dearest connections, and plunged into dungeons with thieves and prostitutes : Let it not be said, that fathers were torn from their wives and children, and sons from their aged parents, because they had the virtue openly to condemn the acknowledged corruptions of Government, and to exert every peaceable means in their power to remove them : Let it not be said, that it was as great a crime to speak the TRUTH, as to be guilty of FELONY.

But rather, O King let it be recorded that George III. had the Wisdom, the Humanity, and the Justice, to step in betwixt these severe and cruel sentences and their Execution.

These are our Desires—these are our plain sentiments. We know they are such as your Majesty is unaccustomed to hear : but if they are supported by Truth and Reason, suffer not the homeliness of our manner to offend your

Majesty. We are plain men, and will not flatter a King. If our wishes be attended to, we are persuaded, it will in some good degree, hush the murmurs which unreasonable severity in a Government never fails to excite; and it may also avert that *Storm*, which it is but too evident has long been awfully gathering and which may burst forth in a moment when your Majesty thinks not.

### TO THOMAS WALKER.

On his late Trial for a Conspiracy, at Lancaster Assizes, when he was honourably acquitted, and his Accuser commanded to Prison for Wilful Perjury.

FELLOW CITIZEN,

**W**ITH hearts charged with sorrow, and bosoms heaving with sympathy, the Sheffield Constitutional Society lately addressed their five devoted brethren, Citizens, Muir, Palmer, Skirving, Margarott, and Gerald, previous to the execution of that severe sentence, whereby they are to be severed from their country; and their country at once deprived of five of its brightest luminaries, its best, its bravest friends.

With equal veneration esteem and gratitude but with far more pleasing sensations, we now congratulate you upon the Victory which Truth



and justice in your person, have obtained over Falshood and Villainy.

The 2d of April, 1794, shall be a day immortal in the Annals of Freedom. We will tell our children and posterity shall read with transport, that on that triumphant day, there was found in Britain a MAN, against whom Perjury reared his blasted front; against whom Malice exhausted all his poisoned quivers; against whom conspiring Villainy employed all his dark assassins; against whom Envy vomited all her rancour; against whom prostituted Spies and hired Informers preferred their blackest accusations; against whom jealous Priests and petty Magisterial Despots pointed all their hottest artillery of anathemas and indictments in vain! His Virtue, purified by sufferings, confirmed, collected, strengthened by opposition, burst forth in all its native splendour, to the astonishment of his friends to the confusion of his foes!

When we contrast the characters of your enemies with your own, we see how low Humanity can be debased by ingratitude, how high humanity can be exalted by Charity.

In you the narrow name of Patriot, which imprisons its influence within the petty limits of country expands into the universal Philanthropist, whose generous bosom welcomes, in one fraternal embrace, the whole FAMILY OF MAN.

Patriotism is confined to provinces and sections of land; it is circumscribed by rivers, by mountains, by seas, or by oceans. Philanthro-

py like the light of Heaven, pours its unbounded influence all round the Globe, and shines upon all the ends of the earth.

Henceforward we renounce the party name, and cold, ungenerous spirit of Patriots; like you we will become Philanthropists; we will no longer be *lovers only of our country*, but, like you, we will be lovers of mankind; and O may your example animate the whole mass of Society, that we may no longer, because we were born on different specks of the same earth, be savages and barbarians to one another, but, wherever Man meets Man, may a Brother hail a Brother!

Signed, by Order of a General Meeting of the Friends of Justice, of Liberty, and of Humanity, in Sheffield,

Sheffield, April }  
7, 1794. }

WM. BROOMHEAD,  
Secretary to the Constitutional Society.

TO  
THE PRINTER  
OF THE  
SHEFFIELD REGISTER.

AH! Mr. Printer, we are all in the dumps again. That d——d *bonnet rouge* will triumph in spite of our teeth, I fear. And yet all Europe knows that we have done every thing in our power to suppress it.

Who could have imagined that a plot so infernally *excellent*—so extensively ramified,—so consummately disposed, and so *divinely* ripe for execution, would have vanished like a dream, and have left us in this despicable situation! detested by one country, despised by another, and scarcely pitied by our own. Ah, now you may shake your head, indeed! We all shake our heads. The — shakes his head too.

O that execrable Barbarian, Roberespierre! to frustrate a conspiracy that would have done honour to the gods. But for him, we had astonished all the world, rendered our names immortal, and made even the Editor of our S— blush with joy at the *gloriously* sanguinary scene. But all is over now. The last head of the Hydra has fallen under that horrible axe of the law the guillotine; and I do not think that all the

assignats we can forge, or all the cash we can raise, will set another r——scheme of butchery on foot, that would present a moderate prospect of success.

Did we fast and pray, did Holland fast and pray, did Spain fast and pray, and did the Emperor promise to fast and pray full three whole days successively, for such a disappointment as this !! But that those *oracles*, the *loaves and fishes*, on every consultation, repeatedly convince us we cannot err, one would readily be half inclined to think, that the cause of the divine right of *Church and King* over the *Swinish multitude*; was not so verily the cause of the CREATOR of us all, as our right reverend instructor Bishop, P—n had taught us to believe. But disappointment and vexation hurry me beyond the pale of political discretion; and should they still accumulate, I dread least in some paroxysm of despair, I may be betrayed into another crime of inconsistency, and impiously commit symptoms of sympathy at the present distressed state of your friends, the People.

The King of P—, aye, that King of —, Mr. Printer, is still the burthen of my thoughts, awake and sleeping. Those confounded Commissioners of the National Convention, have shewn him such millions of cogent reasons for withdrawing himself from the *coronal Coalition*, that we shall inevitably lose him; unless they providentially have delivered those reasons into his possession: in such case, we may pos-



sibly persuade the tergiversating M—to inclose them in his coffers; and, by presenting to his view new reasons, full as cogent, happily recal him to the royal road of honour and renown. Should good fortune so ordain, the sublime cause of Royalty still may triumph. Still may our wondrous Knight, Sir Woeful, ponder o'er his pension so miraculously earned, by transforming a whole people to an *herd of Swine*! still may the *loaves and fishes* declare us for their favourite protectors, and still may—trample on the ruins of the rabble.

But, on mature reflection, our case may not be so truly deplorable, as our harrassed imaginations have hitherto depicted it, even if the much deprecated event does take place; for should Prussia positively secede, he will have forty or fifty thousand **MACHINES** for which no immediate use can occur in his own dominions: and as the fortunes, as well as lives of loyal subjects of this country, are pledged to support this most feelingly *just and necessary* war, we can take those **Machines** into our pay, and, I dare say, on full as reasonable terms as the **Machines** taken in our service from the Electorate of Hanover. And with such a mass of warlike instruments at our command gods! what glorious conquests might we not atchieve?

Let me see. Forty thousand of *Prussian English*. Twenty five thousand *Hanoverian English*. thirty thousand of *Dutch English* twenty thousand of *French emigrant English*. fifteen thou-

land of *Hessian and German English*, and sixty thousand of *John Bull's English*, will make our armies one hundred and ninety thousand strong. Heavens? how the martial furor warms me.

With a force so reasonably raised, and so easily maintained, those desperate and *abandoned wretches*, the freemen of France, would stand no chance at all.

Then, Mr. Printer, we should be assured of Dunkirk, without hazarding the loss of another immense train of artillery, as we might deluge the inhabitants with our own water. *Lisle* would fall, too without a shot. *Landau* but *Landau* will open her gates to *Cobourg* as soon as his Highness can prevail on the surly inhabitants to receive him. *Calais*—no, we would not deluge *Calais*, as it would be so handy a little port to dispatch our packets from, with hourly expresses of our astonishing and truly *windmill* achievements.

From *Calais* we would march to *Abbeville*; and on passing the proud cliffs of that rebellious coast, we would fire a *feu de joye*, by way of salute to our friends on the opposite side of the water at Dover, and that neighbourhood: they, unfortunate devils! would snuff the fragrant breeze issuing from the perspirable matter pressed from our bodies by the knapsacks full of honour with which we should be loaded, and blink with envy at the incomprehensible prospects of happiness before us.

At *Abbeville* we would halt a day or two that

we might set our numerous incarcerated friends at liberty, and regale their famished stomachs with the beef and pudding which we should have in our—pockets.

From thence we should march incontinently to ; there we would call a council of War, and consult whether it would be most prudent to proceed immediately to plunder Paris, and roast the rascally Convention; or, first make a small circumbendibus, and possess ourselves of Brest: and then make another small circumbendibus and possess ourselves of Toulon. For, as the old adage says, “ the furthest way about, is the nearest road home,” we might possibly get to Paris full as soon by circumparading the whole Republic, as by marching directly towards the Capital.

Then, Mr. Printer, for now I am on my career, I'll be stoppt by no man, but once in my life, enjoy victory in idea at least. Then Mr. Printer, after retaking Toulon, and repairing the ruined fortunes of our friends, the traitors in Marseilles, we might glide over the mountains and be at Paris presently. But as expedition is not the most profitable mode of making war, for some people; and, as by that time, our bellies would be tolerably full of fighting, and our backs intolerably bruised by the continual and repeated burthens of honours laid on them by the grateful inhabitants of the country; it might probably be deemed requisite to return into Inaug

winter quarters at Ghent and Ostend; and think of marching to Paris the ensuing spring.

Yours, &c.

ARISTOCRAT.

*April 4. 1794.*

P. S. Notwithstanding we are resolved to keep despair from us as long as possible; yet, if in spite of Burgundy, she should approach, I am determined to trouble you with an open, candid, and ingenious history of our conduct since 1789, by way of a last dying speech and confession; and will then look out for some good natured, silly old Coroner, who pays so much regard to the liberty of the subject, as will induce him to view our *happy departure* from the odious presence of a *Swinish Multitude*, with a favourable eye, and direct the Jury not to add the guilt of *felo de se*, to the rest of our frailties.

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